

Worship Service: GRATITUDE (Sunday before Thanksgiving)

Welcome: Welcome! It's so good to be together to celebrate faith and community today. My name is ____ and I'll be leading our worship time today. This week we'll be celebrating Thanksgiving, so it's an appropriate time to talk about **gratitude** and giving thanks for our blessings. Please pray with me as we open our time together.

Opening Prayer: Great and loving God, we ask that your Holy Spirit bless our time together and to refresh us with your presence. In the midst of a world full of trouble and strife, we thank you for watching over us, guiding us, and especially forgiving us. Enable us to enter your presence joyfully and reverently, and let us depart today with the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Fill us, O God, with the peace which passes understanding. Amen.

Opening Hymn: Doxology, p. 1

Statement of Faith (page 1): Let us affirm our statement of faith by reciting Psalm 23 together:

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

³He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

⁴Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

⁵Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

⁶Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hymns:

For the Beauty of the Earth, p. 2

Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us, p. 3

Amazing Grace, p. 4

First reading: Psalm 100. A Psalm for giving thanks.
Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!

² Serve the Lord with gladness!

Come into his presence with singing!

³ Know that the Lord, he is God!

It is he who made us, and we are his;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.

⁴ Enter his gates with thanksgiving,
and his courts with praise!

Give thanks to him; bless his name!

⁵ For the Lord is good;

his steadfast love endures forever,
and his faithfulness to all generations.

This is the word of the Lord; thanks be to God.

Hymns:

Holy, Holy, Holy, p. 5

Jesus Loves Me, p. 6

Second reading: The History of Thanksgiving¹

Thanksgiving was established as a national holiday by one of our presidents. Does anyone know which president that was? [allow guesses] It was Abraham Lincoln, right in the middle of the Civil War. In October of 1863, Lincoln decided to proclaim a day of Thanksgiving, and in his official proclamation, he wrote this:

“It has seemed to me fit and proper that [God’s gracious gifts] should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States ... to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November ... as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwells in the heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up [thanks to God for] blessings they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows,

¹ <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=69900>

orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil [war], and [beg] the Almighty hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it.”

Hymns:

Softy and Tenderly, p. 7

Leaning on the Everlasting Arms, p. 8

Interactive Homily:

Let's talk a bit more about gratitude and thanksgiving.

- First: What is gratitude? What “posture” of the heart does gratitude take?
 - Humility
 - Not that we deserved a blessing or good thing; it's a gift.
- Why is the fall season a particularly good time for giving thanks, especially if you're a farmer?
 - Harvest! An abundance of blessings that you could not have made happen on your own.
- When Abraham Lincoln declared a national day of Thanksgiving right in the middle of the Civil War, what do you think he was trying to accomplish?
 - Bring people together; repent of ingratitude; turn toward God for forgiveness and guidance
- When you think of all the things that have happened in your life, what are the things you are most thankful for?
 - People; things; experiences
- Have you ever been eventually thankful for something that was hard at first?
 - Example from the Civil War → abolished slavery
 - Example from the Bible: the death of Jesus → our reconciliation with God
- I can say that I am so very thankful for each and everyone one of you: for your wisdom, your life experience, your long faithfulness, your openness to me and to each other, your patience and joy even in the midst of transition and change and sometimes hardship.

... Let's take a moment to silently pray in thankfulness for God's many blessings, and to ask God to bring to mind someone to whom we could say “thank you” today as a practice of gratitude.

(Silent Prayer) ... Lord, thank you Now let us say the Lord's prayer together:
Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever, Amen.

Hymns:

This is My Father's World, p. 9

It is Well with My Soul, p. 10

Standing on the Promises, p. 11

Third Reading: Gratitude, from *Spiritual Literacy* by Frederic and Mary Ann Brussat²

The medieval Christian mystic Meister Eckhart suggests that if the only prayer we say in our lifetime is "thank you," it would suffice.

Yes, and why not every day! Let's put a song of praise on our lips in the early morning. For the breath that fills our lungs and for our unique bodies. For loved ones, family, and friends. "Praise God," says the teacher Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. "It puts everything into its proper place and perspective." Gratitude rejoices with her sister joy and is always ready to light the candles and have a party. Let's endorse British writer G. K. Chesterton's idea of "taking things with gratitude and not taking things for granted."

Hymns:

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing, p. 12

Shall We Gather at the River, p. 13

Fourth Reading: Ephesians 1: 15-18

¹⁵ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of

² adapted; p. 184-185

him, ¹⁸ having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

Hymns:

Blest Be the Tie that Binds, p. 14

I Need Thee Every Hour, p. 15

Closing Blessing: (Strike bell as you say the word “Lord”)

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and grant you peace. Amen.

Closing Hymn: Doxology, p. 23